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THE PURPOSE OF THIS MAGAZINE

THE PALIMPSEST, issued monthly by the State Historical Society of Iowa, is devoted to the dissemination of Iowa History. Supplementing the other publications of this Society, it aims to present the materials of Iowa History in a form that is attractive and a style that is popular in the best sense—to the end that the story of our Commonwealth may be more widely read and cherished.

BENJ. F. SHAMBAUGH

THE MEANING OF PALIMPSEST

In early times a palimpsest was a parchment or other material from which one or more writings had been erased to give room for later records. But the erasures were not always complete; and so it became the fascinating task of scholars not only to translate the later records but also to reconstruct the original writings by deciphering the dim fragments of letters partly erased and partly covered by subsequent texts.

The history of Iowa may be likened to a palimpsest which holds the records of successive generations. To decipher these records of the past, reconstruct them, and tell the stories which they contain is the task of those who write history.

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THE PALIMPSEST

EDITED BY RUTH A. GALLAHER

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Fiction as History

The conservative historian, or as one critic has designated him the honest-to-God historian, confines himself solely to official records and legislative enactments. His germane relative, the social historian, allows himself more leeway, and welcomes personal letters and diaries as contributing agencies to his knowledge of the past.

The writer of fiction, especially if he entertains a bias toward history, desires to embody truths of human life in a setting which records of the past or observations of his own times have made clear to him. He plays a treble role. He must familiarize himself with documents, legislative decrees, and authenticated weather reports, and he must steep himself in old letters and recollections, in folklore and diaries, and in newspaper items. Then, with imaginative insight, he must breathe life into the past through his characters, who speak the language of the past, and dramatize their lives against a chosen historical background.

If such a writer of fiction has mastered his source material, possesses insight into human motives, and has the ability to tell a good story, he too can make a lasting contribution to the history of his region. Drop from literature, for instance, Malory's *Morte D'Arthur* and Cervantes' *Don Quixote* and the world is deprived of much knowledge concerning chivalry; drop the trilogy of Herbert Quick from the fiction of Iowa and the State loses realistic pictures of its development.

Iowa has been fortunate in the interpreters of her past. Writers, such as Herbert Quick, have felt the spirit of the pioneers and shared in their building of the State; and other writers, such as Ruth Suckow, with the appraising eye of the social historian, have been keen observers of contemporaneous history in its process of unfolding.

The struggle of early Iowa settlers to overcome nature — searing summer heat, biting blizzards that swept across the open prairies, rust in wheat, locusts, and chinch bugs — necessarily precluded much literary writing before 1880. By that time free land had all but disappeared and five railroads had crossed the State with numerous spurs running north or south to join county seat towns with neighboring villages. Public high schools had almost crowded out the few and scattered private academies. When the nation cele-

brated its centenary in 1876, Iowa with thirty years of statehood behind her became conscious that she too possessed a history.

In the late eighties, the literary East began to show interest in two Iowa writers — Hamlin Garland and Alice French. Although Wisconsin claims Hamlin Garland because he was born in that State, and Illinois because he made Chicago his home for many years, Iowa also has a right to claim him since she nurtured and educated him from his seventh to his twentieth year. His autobiographical *A Son of the Middle Border* is graphic with the Iowa prairies, with fall plowing, with folksongs learned in log cabins and log schoolhouses, with realistic pictures of overweary and overburdened farm wives and farmers rising in revolt against railroad discriminations and the greed of mortgage-holders.

Garland's short story, "Under the Lion's Paw", in *Main-Travelled Roads,* has become a classic of this period, epitomizing the revolt of the farming population of the Middle West. After depriving the mortgagee and his family of the rewards of three years of sacrifice and backbreaking toil, the owner of the mortgage says in derision, "Why, man, don't look at me like that. Don't take me for a thief. It's the law. The reg'lar thing. Everybody does it."

Three other early novels by Hamlin Garland — *Jason Edwards, A Spoil of Office,* and *A Member of the Third House* — deal savagely with graft as it affected the farmers, then wholly unorganized and at the mercy of bankers, railroad magnates, and politicians. An undercurrent of righteous indignation at social injustice found its way into these tales of the Midwest. These stories can still be read as fiction, good stories well told, and as history, which portrays with drab details of mud and numbing toil the contemporary rural history of the 1880's and 1890's. In *Prairie Folks* and *Main-Travelled Roads,* both collections of short stories, Hamlin Garland pictured Iowa barnyards, full of clayey gumbo in spring and dust filled "chuck holes" in summer, farm houses ugly without and inconvenient within, and men and women breaking under low financial returns and the endless routine of farm chores.

Two decades later, Hamlin Garland, after detouring for a time in romance laid in regions as far apart as New York and the Rockies, returned to the Iowa scene with *A Son of the Middle Border* (1917) and the Pulitzer prize-winning *A Daughter of the Middle Border* (1921). Hamlin Garland himself is the hero of the first and his pioneering mother of the second. In these books the bitterness of his earlier short stories and nov-

els has been softened by time; although he never forgot the hardships, the sweat, and the barnyard smells which the "dirt farmer" endured, the artist in him overshot the endless routine of milking, sowing, and plowing, with splashes of winter sunsets, bird life in hazel copses, and the fiddle accompanying the "do-si-do" and the "swing your partners" of the square dances. Without these tales the history of Iowa and its share in the middle border would be much less known in America than it is today.

Before 1910 no Iowa writer was better known in the East than was Alice French, who chose to use the pen name of Octave Thanet because it might pass either as a masculine or feminine name. She belonged to a prominent and wealthy family in Davenport. Her earliest writing, strangely enough for the daughter of an industrialist and a woman of her day, dealt with sociological themes. Several of her stories, published in the *Atlantic, Scribner's, Century, Lippincott's,* and the *Arena,* show a great sympathy for the laboring man as well as an interest in Iowa's farmers.

A number of Alice French's short stories have been collected in *The Captured Dream, A Slave to Duty & Other Women, A Book of True Lovers,* and *Stories of a Western Town.* Many of these stories have Iowa backgrounds. Written in a

clear style, they present with humor and excellent characterizations many close-ups of the beginnings of industrial life in Iowa before the tempo of living had been accelerated by Model T Fords, tractors, and combines.

Perhaps her best story is "The Besetment of Kurt Lieders" from her *Stories of a Western Town*. The scene is laid in Davenport in the 1880's and the story deals with a serious crisis in the life of an old German cabinetmaker, Kurt Lieders, who loved his craft but found it almost impossible to find his niche in the regimentation demanded by a change of management in the plant. He is saved from "doing himself to death" only by the efforts of his clumsy peasant wife, Thekla, who, with surprising resourcefulness, bargains shrewdly with the new employer.

Although born in 1861, the same year as Hamlin Garland, Herbert Quick came much more slowly into recognition, but no other contribution has equalled the panorama of Iowa history which Herbert Quick presented in his trilogy of *Vandemark's Folly, The Hawkeye,* and *The Invisible Woman*. Mrs. Bertha M. Shambaugh in reviewing these books in 1923, called Herbert Quick "the restorer of Iowa palimpsests." He rubbed off the accumulations of the years and took his readers back to pioneering life.

In Quick's case the tragedy of infantile paralysis proved a blessing, for because of it he was permitted to satisfy his craving for books. He owed much to the McGuffey Readers, which he knew "by heart". As a farm boy, a rural teacher, a reporter, a lawyer, an agricultural editor, he knew Iowa's people and their problems at first hand. His earliest novels, *Double Trouble, The Broken Lance,* and *The Brown Mouse,* present in fictional form several political problems which affected the village churches and schools and the status of the farmer before the days of the Farm Bureau.

Without the bitterness of the youthful Hamlin Garland, Herbert Quick portrayed the men and women he had known. In Fremont McConkey he relived many of his own experiences, at first near Eldora and later in northwestern Iowa. *Vandemark's Folly* has for its back structure the establishing of township government; *The Hawkeye* depicts the rise of county government and treats in vivid detail of the development of the Populist Party and the Granger Movement; the last of the three, *The Invisible Woman,* with the descendants of Vandemark and his neighbors as chief characters, deals with the graft and political scandals centering about Sioux City.

From Quick's earliest recollections came his de-

scriptions of the untouched prairie and the heat of prairies on fire so vividly protrayed in *Vandemark's Folly*. From his work as reporter and editor came his clear insight into Iowa's problems. This firsthand knowledge of Iowa, its agricultural problems, and political intrigue makes this collection a graphic picture of Iowa history between 1850 and 1900. In these three volumes the reader sees virgin soil being transformed into farms and townsites and the development of trade, transportation, schools, and culture.

Closely related in theme to Quick's *Invisible Woman* are two fairly recent novels from the pen of J. Hyatt Downing, *Sioux City* (1940) and *Anthony Trant* (1941). They deal with the flamboyant period of the eighties when rococo architecture, Victorian fountains, and cast-iron deer adorned the residential districts of Sioux City when this town was "booming" too fast for its own good.

Since Iowa is a State that is largely agricultural, short stories and the novels of farm life have naturally dominated Iowa fiction. Only a few can be singled out for comment. Josephine Donovan's *Black Soil* vividly portrays the life of an improvident Irish pioneer, lovable for his big heart and robust sense of humor, Tim Connor by name, and his wife, Nell Connor, who mothered

Tim as well as the six small Connors and a half-Indian waif. The story, laid in northwestern Iowa, is climaxed by the coming of the railroad. The cricket and locust-ridden farmstead then became the site of a new village and Connor a a prosperous promoter.

Margaret Wilson's *The Able McLaughlins,* the Harper prize-winning novel for 1923, and its sequel, *The Law and the McLaughlins,* present a dramatic portrayal of Scotch pioneers who settled in Tama County. Margaret Wilson, who belongs to the family of "Tama Jim" Wilson, drew upon family records and reminiscences for the two McLaughlin novels. They give vivid close-ups of a thrifty Scotch colony whose members on occasion took the law in their own hands in order to rout from the country near Tama a body of vicious horse thieves. Humor is supplied by the Scotch housewife who, when her husband refused to build her something better than a floorless cabin and instead bought more land, almost returned to Scotland on money which she had concealed in her muff. "I won't live in a pig sty", she commented when her husband reached the hotel at the moment she was bargaining for stage transportation. The husband capitulated.

Bess Streeter Aldrich has succeeded in making Iowa's past "come alive" in her stories. She di-

vides her major interests between village and farm life. *A Lantern in Her Hand* has its opening chapters in Iowa but its scene is later moved to Nebraska. Against a background of a growing college in a small Iowa town, *Miss Bishop* manages to make a heroine out of a school teacher. *Song of Years* plays upon one theme song, the pioneer virtue of "pullin' through". The hero, Jeremiah Martin, in real life was Zimri Streeter, Mrs. Aldrich's grandfather, a pioneer sheepherder, farmer, and legislator.

"Pullin' through" meant limited diet, the hardships of cold winters, and the Civil War. In gathering her materials, Mrs. Aldrich made a very exhaustive study of old letters, printed and oral recollections of pioneers, and early newspapers. She is unusually accurate in her historical details. Both Bess Streeter Aldrich and Ruth Suckow have utilized the Iowa village, but beyond the village spreads the countryside. This is especially true of Mrs. Aldrich's short stories which center about Ma Mason and Nelle Cutter.

Ruth Suckow frequently unites with her pictures of village life the slow absorption of the German element into the culture of Iowa. One notes this in her depiction of the Kaetterhenrys in *Country People,* but it is also present in *The Odyssey of a Nice Girl* and in *The Bonney Fam-*

ily. This mingling of the two cultures is seen also in her short stories. In *Midwestern Primitive,* for example, the German grandmother wears a "mother hubbard" and "waddles" and yet manages to steal attention away from her sophisticated daughter-in-law.

The best known of Ruth Suckow's novels is *The Folks*. In this book she ruthlessly analyzed the home and village life of the Fergusons, who started out with high ideals for their children but finally were forced to accept the hope that their four offspring might possibly do as well as their parents had done. In *The Folks* Ruth Suckow introduces a social study of the early nineteenth century and in the various chapters devoted to the four Ferguson offspring she traces the gradual breakdown of the old ideals of home and church life. Ruth Suckow looks at life, whether it be in Iowa or not, with clear-sighted penetration.

Depicting farm life in the period between 1910 and 1930 Paul Corey has written a trilogy which deals very realistically with the difficulties which farmers in Iowa faced when organization still lay in the offing and with the effect of World War I upon the farmers and their families. Through *Three Miles Square, The Road Returns,* and *County Seat* a note of tragedy runs in the character of the Widow Mantz. Better educated than

her neighbors yet much of a peasant at heart, the Widow Mantz met defeat after defeat because she could not induce any of her four children to fill the niches which her ambition had carved for them. In 1946 Paul Corey returned to the Iowa scene with his *Acres of Antaeus,* a story of the depression years, portraying the dire effects of company ownership and management of farms on the lives of Iowa farmers.

Paul Corey knows his farm background material — its grain elevators, its system of threshing grain, its need for organization, and its faulty system of rural education. In his trilogy and in *Acres of Antaeus* he does not paint an inviting picture of rural life in Iowa. Bleak, drab, unsavory details crowd his pages. Although both Garland and Corey made use of the "dirt farmer", the latter lacks the emotional fervor of Hamlin Garland who, when he wrote his *Main-Travelled Roads* and *Prairie Folks,* spoke out of a full and indignant heart and railed against the ills that were breaking his father and mother and their neighbors.

At least three Iowa authors utilized the vantage point of an Iowa parsonage where they saw the riffraff and the pew holder, the unlovely and the "mothers in Zion" pass in and out. In small town parsonages these writers learned of petty

meannesses, of waste and sacrifices of human life, of comic and tragic errors, and of the ambitions and ideals of common people.

The role of the village minister is presented sympathetically in Ruth Suckow's *New Hope,* and both humorously and thoughtfully in Hartzell Spence's *One Foot in Heaven* and in *Get Thee Behind Me.* In Spence's books, back of the omnipresent humor in the depiction of Spence's father, the reader observes a succession of villages with busybodies and interferers, as well as the petty frictions which upset choirs and Sunday schools.

Ethel Hueston's stories of nearly three decades ago, *Prudence of the Parsonage* and *Prudence Says So,* present life from the viewpoint of a Methodist minister's daughter. Interest in these was revived in 1941 when she published *Preacher's Wife,* a partially fictionalized life of her mother and her father. For the most part the scene is laid in small pastorates in southeastern Iowa. Family crises were constantly developing, for the father was not a financier and could not resist a sale, while the mother, on a very limited income, was rearing nearly a dozen children. These stories of ministers' families show very clearly that not all the human problems in the State grew out of agricultural unrest.

Iowa history has found its way into other vari-

eties of fiction. In *Buckskin Breeches,* Phil Stong has told a roistering story of territorial days in Iowa when pioneers, in advance of legal surveys, marked off their claims and organized their own legal procedures. Best known of Stong's many Iowa stories is *State Fair* where the attention is centered on Blue Boy, the prize-winning Hampshire boar.

Charles Russell has used more facts than fiction in his *Raftin' on the Mississip'* in which he has gathered together from recollections of his youth and other sources many tales of the Upper Mississippi River craft and river settlements, as well as old songs, superstitions, and folk lore. In *Doctor — Here's Your Hat!,* Dr. Joseph A. Jerger mingles a plea for the family doctor with an account of his own town and rural practice of medicine in Black Hawk County in the early part of this century.

Also in the debatable land between fact and fiction comes *Grandmother Brown's Hundred Years,* 1827–1927, a record of a courageous woman of New England stock, who transferred her energy and her faith in life to Iowa in 1856. Settling near Fort Madison, she reared a family of eight children. Johnson Brigham, after spending fifteen years as State Librarian and writing his *Iowa — Its History and Its Foremost Citizens,*

was well prepared to put into fictional form his findings concerning the wintering of the dragoons at the second Fort Des Moines in 1843 during Iowa's territorial days. He called his novel *The Sinclairs of Old Fort Des Moines* and utilized Keokuk and the Sauk Indians as prominent characters.

In 1945 Susan Glaspell published *Judd Rankin's Daughter*. In this philosophical novel, the author returns to the Iowa field which she had long neglected. She and her husband, George Cram Cook, spent their youth near Davenport. In two early novels, *The Visioning* (1911) and *The Glory of the Conquered* (1909) and in the early part of the biography of her husband, *The Road to the Temple,* she made use of Iowa backgrounds.

Judd Rankin's Daughter is really the story of Judd Rankin. Fresh from an Iowa farm in the vicinity of Davenport, he attended the University and became an editor in a Mississippi River town. Each week he published an agricultural column in his paper which was widely quoted by other editors. The meaning of agriculture, its relation to Iowa farmers, and their attitudes toward life were constantly recurring themes.

Like Plato, Judd Rankin did not solve these problems of democratic living but he pondered

over them, and like Plato's master, Socrates, he constantly set a series of questions before his readers. Before the close of World War II, Judd Rankin's only grandson is sent home mentally disturbed. His father and mother grieve because they find nothing in their philosophy which will help him.

The boy and his grandfather meet, find that they speak and understand the same language. The closeness of sowing and harvesting to man's needs and a feeling that out of indignation for man's wrongs and action to relieve them came "the song of the earth — clear to heaven", gave the young man the stability he needed. The pages are packed with meaning and, like Bacon's recipe for reading, are to be digested, not casually read.

When Iowans in another century or two wish to recapture the story of Iowa's past, they will be deeply grateful to Herbert Quick for his pictures of the unbroken prairies with its flower and bird life, to Hamlin Garland for his *Main-Travelled Roads,* to Ruth Suckow for her stories of village life, and to the many other novelists and short story writers who have drawn upon Iowa history, Iowa landscapes, and Iowa people for their materials and their characters.

LUELLA M. WRIGHT

Schoolbooks of Sarah Gillespie

When chubby four-year-old Sarah Lorinda Gillespie, one spring day in 1870, walked shyly into the schoolhouse, which had just been erected in Subdistrict Number Six, Coffins Grove Township, Delaware County, she was not in the least frightened. With her was her six-year-old brother, and the teacher, Harriet Hawley, was her aunt who lived in the Gillespie home about a mile and a half away — a long walk, it would seem, for a four-year-old.

This is the story of the schoolbooks that Sarah Gillespie used during the years between 1870 and 1879. These treasured volumes, long preserved at home, were deposited in 1945 in the library of the State Historical Society, with a brief autobiography by the original owner, Mrs. Sarah Gillespie Huftalen, who was living on a farm near Manchester.

The first books, of course, were primers. Little Sarah had three of these. One, the *American Illustrated Primer,* seems to have had only a paper cover, but someone carefully bound the edges of each sheet with a narrow band of heavy blue paper. Lists of words to be learned (by a first

grader or pre-school child) include dilemma, apostate, and pollute. A second volume, coverless, is *The Little Folks' Pictorial Primer: And Child's Book for Home and School,* dated 1856. Both primers were published by Kiggins, Tooker & Co., New York, and both are profusely illustrated with pictures of children whose faces are those of adult men and women.

The third primer, still in its bluish-green cover, is *Sargent's Standard School Primer,* part two, published in 1868 by John L. Shorey of Boston and copyrighted by John O. Sargent. The author, however, was probably his brother, Epes Sargent. Another brother, George B. Sargent, was one of Iowa's early bankers and promoters. The title page informs us that it was "illustrated by Billings" but no further information concerning him has been found. The pictures in this reader show children with children's faces, not those of men and women.

The collection contains five readers. First among these is *Sanders' Union Reader* "for primary schools and families", by Charles W. Sanders, A. M. When Sarah had finished this reader, she was given a *Second Eclectic Reader,* by the famous William H. McGuffey, and then she was promoted to a third reader prepared by Epes Sargent. She also used a fourth reader by the same

author. The last reader in the collection is McGuffey's *New Sixth Eclectic Reader,* containing excerpts from the works of such writers as William Shakespeare, William Pitt, Charles Dickens, Walter Scott, and Felicia Browne Hemans. A bookmark of colored floss at page 304 of this Sixth reader calls attention to "Discontent: An Allegory", by Joseph Addison, a story in which men are permitted to discard their own burdens and take those which seem lighter, only to find that they were in no better condition.

William H. McGuffey was also the author of the *New Eclectic Spelling-Book* from which Sarah Gillespie painstakingly learned to spell such words as "dis'-pu ta ble" and "pros e lyt ism" and write from dictation "After a *dose* he fell into a *doze*" and "It is certainly *meet* to *mete* out *meat* to hunters". The type in this old spelling book is small and much space is given to the study of vowels, dipthongs, and tripthongs. Pronunciation was a mechanical process and to facilitate it, words were syllabicated and embellished with significant dots and figures.

Samuel S. Greene, A. M., "Professor in Brown University", and S. W. Clark, A. M., wrote the grammars in Sarah Gillespie's collection. These books have the small type of the period, but their contents do not vary greatly from the usual gram-

mar textbooks. The Clark grammar, however, featured two intricate, circular "grammatic charts" which, it was claimed, presented "the entire Etymology of the English language". The Greene text includes a fascinating series of ungrammatical expressions "collected from a large number of schools". These were to be corrected; but present-day psychologists would probably frown on focusing the attention of pupils upon such glaring errors as, "I can't get it no way", "Where be I goin' to set?", and "I've larned it to her".

A statement enclosed in James S. Eaton's *Common School Arithmetic* indicates that the complete mastery of this volume required three years. Sarah Gillespie began its study in 1874 when she was nine years old. The pupils reached decimals the first year and percentage the second year. The third year they were supposed to finish the book, including square and cube root, geometrical progression, mensuration, and the metric system. The "examples" often seem complicated to us. Usually the answers were given to what were considered difficult problems, leaving the pupil to struggle only with the process of arriving at them. "If a globe of gold 1 inch in diameter is worth $100, what is the diameter of a globe worth $6400?" was considered fairly easy; no answer was given. But the next one was considered more difficult. "Sup-

pose the diameter of the earth is 7912 miles, and that it takes 1404928 bodies like the earth to make one as large as the sun, what is the diameter of the sun?" One can imagine twelve-year-old Sarah Gillespie struggling to come out with the right answer — 886,144 miles. Another problem was less astronomical. "A fox has 18 rods the start of a hound, but the hound runs 25 rods while the fox runs 22; how far must the hound run to overtake the fox?"

Another book on mathematics was a *New Elementary Algebra,* prepared by Horatio N. Robinson, LL. D. A note in the front indicates that it was purchased in September, 1877, when Sarah was twelve years old.

Sarah Gillespie used two geographies during her years in school in Coffins Grove Township, both published by Cowperthwait and Company of Philadelphia. D. M. Warren's *A New Primary Geography,* published in 1873, introduced the children to a study of the world in this wise: "This is the beautiful land which God hath given us for our dwelling-place." Descriptive materials are combined with questions to be answered from the text. The illustrations stimulate the imagination. One can imagine an Iowa farm child pouring over pictures of a "tiger hunt in India" or "ladies of Havana riding in a volante".

Warren's *Common School Geography*, "the big g'ography", boasted of "an entirely new series of finely engraved Copper-plate Maps". And maps are omnipresent; in fact most of this geography is given over to maps and the questions to be answered from the maps. But one can extract information that is of interest today. In 1875 the population of the United States was estimated at 40,000,000. In 1870, New York claimed 942,000 people and London 3,000,000. Alaska had "500 whites"; San Francisco was the largest city in California and neither Los Angeles nor Hollywood was mentioned. The population of St. Paul surpassed that of Minneapolis by 2,000 souls. In Iowa, Davenport, with a population of 20,038, was the largest city. Dubuque, cited as "the largest city in the mining district", was the second largest city with 18,434.

In the appraisal of States producing "important staples", according to the 1870 census, Iowa ranked fourth in corn (topped by Illinois, Indiana, and Missouri), fifth in oats, third in wheat, eighth in potatoes, fifth in hay, and sixth in barley. Iowa was characterized as one of the most fertile States in the Union. In addition to the thirty-seven States, this geography listed ten Territories — Idaho, Washington, Montana, Dakota, Wyoming, Colorado, Utah, Arizona, New Mexico, and

the Indian Territory — the District of Columbia, and Alaska.

Of Europe's "sixteen states", Russia, Austria, Germany, and Turkey were described as empires; Great Britain, Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Holland, Belgium, Spain, Portugal, Italy, and Greece were kingdoms; and Switzerland and France were republics. The German Empire was described as having been constituted "for the purpose of repelling French invasion." France was rated as "one of the richest and most powerful countries in the world" while England, with colonies in every quarter of the globe, "unites under one sovereign a greater number of people than are ruled by any other government." The Russian Empire was described as "the largest in extent in the world." In 1875 Spain controlled many islands including Cuba, Porto Rico, and the Philippines. The "Five Great Powers" in 1875 were Great Britain, Germany, France, Russia, and Austria. The United States was not included.

A series of questions required that the pupil remember each statement and give the proper response when the teacher asked the question. "What is manufacturing?", the teacher was to ask, and the pupil was supposed to reply, "Manufacturing is the art of adapting natural productions to the uses of man."

A. S. Barnes was the author of the *History of the United States,* down to the centennial year, 1876. Sarah Gillespie and her schoolmates lived in the reconstruction period and the current topics at the supper tables included the Atlantic cable, Horace Greeley's "Go west young man", and the impeachment of President Johnson, but Barnes devoted much space to military matters. In the back of this history are two hundred and eighty-nine questions "for class use" and two hundred under the heading "Historical Recreations". Some of these were forerunners of our "information please" questions. "What three ex-presidents died on the Fourth of July?" Another asked, "What President introduced rotation in office?"

What about writing? "We used the Spencerian Copy Books", wrote Mrs. Huftalen, "with their large lined pages headed by beautiful penmanship, principles of the letters, and the copies were fine mottoes to learn and follow. We also used slates with pencils of slate or soap stone." Sponges and bottles of water were kept on hand by each pupil. Blackboard erasers were home-made blocks of wood having sheepskin tacked on.

These books used by Sarah Gillespie in the seventies and eighties preserve something of the mother's interest in her daughter's education. On many of the fly leaves, in fine Spencerian hand-

writing, are inscriptions such as the one in the arithmetic — "A present to Sarah for trying to learn. October 8, 1874. Thursday By E. E. Gillespie". In the fourth reader Sarah's mother made the same note and wrote below it this verse:

"Play well your part and bear in mind
A constant friend is hard to find
When you find one that is kind and true
Change not the old one for the new.
Emily E. Gillespie."

The books show evidence of care and interest. "Our textbooks", wrote Sarah Huftalen in 1945, "were neatly covered with remnants of cloth from our dresses, shirts, and aprons. They were not marked, soiled, or dog-eared intentionally."

And so the schoolbooks of a girl in the seventies mutely portray the standards and the problems of the period. Geography was learned by rote, not by trips; grammar was intricate not casual; reading was supposed to inculcate morality and information rather than stimulate the imagination; arithmetic dealt with such problems as labor costs, carpeting, or farm sales and purchases, not to mention mind-teasers. Education is the preparation of youth for its own age. Sarah Gillespie's books are history.

JOSEPHINE DONOVAN

School Days of the Seventies

Like a traveler returned from a journey, I have been asked to share with you some of the scenes and experiences of my childhood days in the country school known as Subdistrict Number Six, Coffins Grove Township, Delaware County, Iowa. The new school building, the first to be erected in the district, was situated on a hill a mile and a half from my father's home. I was four and my brother, Henry, was six when we began the first term in this building. My aunt, Harriet C. Hawley, who lived in our home, was the teacher.

I recall only a few things about this first term at school — the teacher reading the Bible and kneeling by her big armchair every morning; the song, "Precious Jewels", which I remember to this day; and the playmates whose faces and names I easily recall. The girls wore crisp new calico dresses and aprons. We looked very like little women and little men. There were about twenty-six children in school that summer, most of them beginners, with boys and girls approximately equal in numbers.

These pupils were the children of pioneer parents in Iowa and grandchildren of pioneers in

New York and Michigan and from their thrifty and industrious forebears they had learned to live frugally. Textbooks were appreciated and were accepted as rewards. My mother raised turkeys and "took in sewing" so that my brother and I might each have a set of schoolbooks.

Henry, my brother, was twenty-two months older than I, but we entered school together and were kept together until the academy we attended later was absorbed into the public high school. We were not only in the same classes; we were dressed in suits of the same color and if one had red mittens the other had the same.

My mother, the eldest daughter in her family, had learned the various trades of millinery, tailoring, dressmaking, and even shoemaking from itinerant tradesmen. She also crocheted, did tatting, dyed, spun, and wove cloth, did embroidery, using a homemade stiletto of bone, and knitted socks, stockings, and mittens, and often hoods. She made even our heavily lined overcoats and cloaks; and my father, brother, and I never wore clothing purchased in the stores until after my mother died in 1888. When I was a student in the academy, I remember, mother made me a pair of high-topped, buttoned shoes. They were of heavy pepper-and-salt cloth, to match my brother's suit, and had morocco tips.

Shoes for girls were made of leather or of black prunella cloth, always high-topped. They might be either laced or buttoned. Some had a star cut out at the top with red or blue morocco underneath. Boots for boys came to the knee and were decorated at the top of the front with a piece of red or blue morocco stamped with some design, perhaps a fleet-footed deer or a horse. Small loops at the sides aided the owner to pull them on, no easy task if the previous day had been wet, for the leather hardened as it dried. Getting boots off was another problem, usually requiring the use of a homemade jack having one V-shaped end held from the floor by a cleat nailed underneath. Both shoes and boots intended for everyday wear had copper-shod toes.

As a matter of course all boys and girls went barefoot in summer. Even after our mothers thought we were too old to go barefoot, we often took off our shoes so we could run faster. It was also more comfortable to go barefoot for our shoes were heavy and often ill-made. Sometimes we put on our shoes before going home; it was easier to wear than to carry them and, perhaps, avoided a reprimand.

Our sunbonnets were of the mover-wagon type, having a wide hood section with slats of heavy paper to hold it out around the face. A crown was

stitched or buttoned onto the hood part, gathered at the nape of the neck, and hung in a cape around the shoulders. Strings tied under the chin held the bonnet in place or, sometimes, allowed it to dangle across the shoulders. A narrow ruffle or points made by folding pieces of the calico trimmed the front of the hood and the crown. The whole bonnet was stiffly starched. As can be imagined these bonnets were warm on a hot day and we girls often removed them and carried them by the strings, with our dinner buckets, though our mothers objected, saying we would get tanned.

Our dresses were of modest length, and usually made in the princess style. Summer dresses were of calico, chambray, and challie, while those worn in the winter were made of wool, tweed, and cashmere. Over our winter dresses, we wore aprons with long sleeves and high necks. Summer aprons might be smaller and fancier, with pockets and ruffles. Underwear for winter was homemade of Canton flannel or wool. Summer underwear, if any, was made of cotton goods, perhaps unbleached muslin. Stockings for both winter and summer were knit by hand.

Most of the children in Coffins Grove Township were comfortably clothed, but once a family moved into the district whose children wore patched and ragged clothing and who brought

scanty or no lunches. I admired the red hair and freckles of one of the boys and pitied him for having to wear trousers with a hole where such garments usually wear through. In spite of his handicap, this boy grew to manhood and became a well-to-do farmer and a good citizen.

Girls in that early school wore circle combs of black rubber to keep their hair from falling over their faces, for we wore our hair bobbed until we were ten or eleven. Often the combs were perforated along the band and ribbons could be woven through the perforations. Older girls wore their hair long, braided and hanging down their backs.

The teachers usually wore dresses with high necks and long sleeves, full skirts and tight-fitting waists. Needless to say the skirts were long as well as full.

Of course we took our lunches. Homemade bread or biscuits and homemade butter made the sandwiches. Cold meat, fried chicken, pickles, hard-boiled eggs, pie, doughnuts, and cake were possibilities. Apples were a luxury. Some of us carried milk for drinking and in winter the milk and apples often froze and had to be thawed in the long drum of the box-wood stove, where they sometimes sizzled. There was no well at the schoolhouse and we children took turns carrying

a pail of water from the well in a pasture a quarter of a mile away.

Reading, writing, arithmetic, history, and grammar were the serious business of our school, but "lay aside your books" was always welcome. Recesses and the noon intermission were devoted to games — pom-pom-pullaway, King William, needle's eye, ante over, dummy on a rock, dare base, fox and geese, and many others. We "kept house" in rooms laid out with stones. In winter there were snow battles and skating on the pond. Girls as well as boys joined in all the games, even baseball and one-old-cat. The teacher seldom played with us or came out in the schoolyard during intermissions.

The pupils found much interest in exploring the natural surroundings. The schoolyard had once been a coral reef and we gathered curious stones which we called "deer's horns" and "rosy stones". Just north of the schoolhouse was a field beautiful in summer with all kinds of flowers — purple violets, wild honeysuckle, pasque flowers, and shooting stars — which our childish fingers eagerly picked and formed into tight little bunches. There were also flowering grasses which we pressed and used for bookmarks.

The virgin prairie on which the schoolhouse was built abounded in snakes, such as the blue racer,

and killing snakes and gophers was considered good sport. The boys made fiddles of cornstalks and whistles of willow twigs, or carved tiny baskets of hazel, hickory, or walnut shells. Girls found beads an ever-present means of recreation. Lucky was the girl who found a hair from a horse's tail (preferably a white one) in the road. On such hairs beads were strung in various designs. These trinkets were exchanged among the pupils with much friendly emotion.

Discipline was not a problem at the Coffins Grove Township school. Occasionally boys were whipped for mistreating other children, but the usual punishment was keeping wrong-doers in at recess or at noon, while others played, or after school.

Competition in school affairs found expression in "spelling down" on Friday afternoons. School programs consisted of readings, dialogues, essays, and songs. My brother and I gave the "Mr. and Mrs. Caudle" dialogue several times. There were no evening entertainments. Our mother used to tell us of the lyceums, singing schools, and penmanship schools she attended, but we had none of these in Subdistrict Number Six.

SARAH GILLESPIE HUFTALEN

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